


# The Difficult Profession of General in the People's Republic of China: A Flood of "Purges" Under Xi Jinping

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The military profession, as we know, has its **risks**. But in China, in recent years, being a general of the People's Liberation Army increasingly resembles participating in a story by **Edgar Allan Poe**, where protagonists vanish one after another following a dark and inexorable script. The saga of purges bloodying the military leadership in Beijing continually enriches itself with new chapters, vaguely recalling the atmospheres of the master of terror's novels, with the small difference that here the "guilty party" has a known address.

## A Frightening Countdown

The recent formalization of **Zhang Youxia**'s removal from the Central Military Commission ends a seven-month mystery, transforming itself into a sort of **drip-by-drip elimination**. Zhang was no ordinary officer: for the supreme leader he was almost an older brother, a "red prince" bound

by family memories and a friendship rooted in childhood. Yet, not even the highest ranks and the most noble connections offer immunity when the Party's axe decides that **loyalty** has ceased to be absolute.

Since Xi Jinping came to power in **2012**, the purge tally has exceeded one hundred and ten senior officers, accelerating vertiginously in the last two years. The magic formula with which these exits from the scene are served is always the same: **serious violations of discipline and law**. Translated from State bureaucratic jargon, it means rampant corruption, colossal bribes, and money diverted from technological modernization funds. In 2025 alone, nearly one million officials of various ranks and grades faced internal justice. But in the case of Zhang and his colleague **Liu Zhenli**, the accusations exceeded the threshold of simple administrative misconduct, touching the extremely dangerous borders of high treason.



China: Taiwan Can Wait, First Xi Cuts Off the Heads of a Few Generals

## Between Coup Suspicions and Fears for Taiwan

Rumors leaking from the corridors of power speak of blows struck against the president's authority, even going so far as to insinuate alleged passages of classified information to foreign services. Behind the smokescreen of official accusations, however, international analysts read motivations that are far more strategic. Zhang Youxia boasted **real combat experience** — a rare luxury among today's generals — dating back to the distant and disastrous 1979 conflict with Vietnam.

According to several readings of Western intelligence, the true fault of the old general may have been prudence. Facing Xi Jinping's grand design to prepare the military machine for a **test of strength on Taiwan by 2027**, the centennial of the armed forces, the old guard allegedly expressed considerable reservations about the feasibility of such a campaign and the real capacity to withstand a clash with the United States. Telling an autocrat that the emperor has no clothes, or that the fleet is not ready, is never a wise move. Even better if the warning comes disguised as a crusade against the corrupt.

## A Leadership Reduced to the Bone

The result of this imposing cleanup operation is a **Central Military Commission reduced to its bare minimum**, now populated by very few survivors, among whom stands out the anti-corruption chief **Zhang Shengmin**, elevated to the rank of second vice president. Xi Jinping seems to be in no hurry to replace the fallen. After all, finding in a rush high-ranking officers who don't have even a skeleton in the closet or an offshore account to justify is a Herculean task even in 21st-century China.

The climb toward military superpower status thus passes through the **solitude of the top**. The Grand Master continues to forge his ideal combat instrument by purging anyone who can claim independent thought or too strong a personal following. It remains to be seen who, among the few still standing, will still dare to give unsolicited advice to the supreme commander, knowing that in the Middle Kingdom the boundary between being